

State/EPA and Stakeholder Partnership to Recycle/Divert Food and Paper Wastes in the Mid-Atlantic

EPA Region 3 - Philadelphia

Geographic location or area of activity: Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia

Description of activity: EPA Region 3 established a Team of its States municipal solid waste (MSW) programs and other stakeholders to increase the diversion/recycling of food and paper wastes. These wastes represent the largest reducible components of the MSW stream. In the FY03-08 Strategic Plan, EPA established a goal of 35% recycling of municipal solid waste by the end of FY08 with a new goal being contemplated of 40% by 2011. With these goals in mind, the EPA Region 3 Food and Paper Waste Diversion Team is working with a variety of recycling professionals to actively promote the establishment and expansion of recycling programs in businesses, institutions, and organizations. The Team is also promoting the energy saving and climate change benefits of recycling and diversion.

Given that little funding or enforcement options exist at EPA to support MSW programs, Region 3 recognized that a partnership approach would be needed to facilitate maximum results. The Team engaged state/local government partners and the private sector as follows:

- On 11/30/06, approximately 65 people, including Nora Goldstein of BioCycle who gave a composting overview attended a Food Waste Recovery Workshop. Others discussed composting technology, residential and commercial collection of food waste, lessons learned from composting organic waste and permitting issues. A follow-up Team meeting established three subcommittees: 1) Increasing Infrastructure, 2) Regulatory Streamlining, and 3) Outreach/Education.
- As a next step, a 6/21/07 workshop was held in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association, PADEP and Pennsylvania Recycling Markets Center to bring together representatives of supermarkets and convenience stores with composters and recyclers. Representatives from Wal Mart, Acme, Giant, WaWa, Whole Foods, Redner's, Giant Eagle and several composters attended. A subsequent meeting with the Farm Bureau discussed possible expansion of farm composting for residual foods.
- Similarly, the Team is working with the Virginia Recycling Association and Chester County, PA (about 1000 farmers) to host composting workshops. Speakers include farmers who already compost food waste, county extension agents, soil conservation staff and permittees.
- Provided grant funding for an in-vessel composter at USDA in Maryland.
- Using RecycleMania to promote recycling/composting at colleges. Hosted a Food Recovery Workshop in Virginia with representatives from Old Dominion and VA Commonwealth universities and ARAMARK.
- Hosted an urban recycling forum, 7/19/07. Many major cities, including Philadelphia and NYC attended.

Results to date: more than 6,000 tons of waste was directly diverted/recycled because of the Team's efforts.

Interagency partners: District of Columbia Department of the Environment; Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control; Maryland Department of the Environment; Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Virginia Department of Environmental Quality; West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection

Local partners: City of Alexandria, Virginia; Whole Foods, Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association; Two Particular Acres Farm; Penn State Recycling Markets Center; ARAMARK Corporation; Chester County, Pennsylvania

Activity URL: www.epa.gov/reg3wcmd/solidwastecomposting.htm